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A Reporter's Notebook: Ferraro Fits in a Game

By JANE PERLEZ

Like many couples with free time on a Sunday afternoon, Representative Geraldine A. Ferraro and her husband, John A. Zaccaro, put on their tennis whites yesterday and played a few games.

It was one more sign of the Democratic Vice-Presidential nominee's effort to behave as much as possible like an ordinary person. Looking fit despite two days of being cooped up in her house in Queens with briefing papers, Mrs. Ferraro seemed unfazed by the cameras zooming in on her as she walked into the West Side Tennis Club in shorts and T-shirt.

"I'm not going to let you run my life, folks, for the next three and a half months," she told reporters last week. Accordingly, twice since returning from the Democratic National Convention, she has attended mass at her church, Our Lady of Mercy in Forest Hills, with Secret Service agents trailing her to the communion table. Only heavy rain canceled her plan to spend the weekend among old friends at her summer home in Saltaire on Fire Island.

In Washington, as she often used to, Mrs. Ferraro dined with Congressional colleagues at a popular downtown Italian restaurant last week and then offered three of them rides home in her motorcade.

A good portion of Mrs. Ferraro's time in the last several days has been consumed with sessions in her living room on foreign policy and military issues. Members of Walter F. Mondale's staff insist she is familiar with the subjects from her chairmanship of the Democratic platform committee and say she only needs some brushing up before going on the road.

Representative Thomas J. Downey, Democrat of Suffolk, gave the Congresswoman a lengthy lecture on nuclear weapons and why the proposed nuclear freeze, which both Mrs. Ferraro and Mr. Mondale support, represents sound military policy. Armed with a projector to show slides on how missiles work, Mr. Downey said he suggested ways for her "to explain the freeze in military terms and not only emotional terms." He also

provided

with Vice President Bush: an extensive compilation of Bush statements on foreign policy.

Late last week, Secretary of State George P. Shultz called the Mondale campaign and offered a State Department briefing for Mr. Mondale and Mrs. Ferraro on sensitive security matters, a senior Mondale aide said. The briefings would be conducted by Michael H. Armacost, Under Secretary for political affairs at the department, according to the Mondale aide.

It is usual, the Mondale staff member said, for the sitting President to offer his opponent briefings on foreign policy issues. What was unusual about the Reagan Administration's gesture, he said, was the source of the briefing. In past years, such briefings have generally come from the Central Intelligence Agency, the aide said.

But he added that the Mondale campaign felt that in this instance, a briefing from Mr. Armacost, a respected career Foreign Service officer, was preferable to one from the Director of Central Intelligence, William J. Casey.

"We would probably have rejected it if it came from Casey," the aide said, citing a recent dispute between several Senators and Mr. Casey over whether he had adequately informed the Intelligence Committee about activities in Central America.